



*United States Embassy
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PRESS RELEASE

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USAID-Supported REB National Writing Competition Winners to be Awarded

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Kigali – Twelve first-place winners of Andika Rwanda, the first national writing competition for children's stories and poems, will receive their awards from the Minister of Education at an awards ceremony being held today at Umubano Hotel in Kigali. The competition, which was launched in February, was organized by the Rwanda Education Board (REB) in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The winners—four primary students, six secondary students, and two adults—were selected through a rigorous evaluation process from a pool of over 3,000 entries, submitted by all 30 districts and over 600 schools.

"The volume and quality of the stories and poems that were submitted is evidence of the enthusiasm of Rwandans, especially Rwandan youth, for making a positive contribution to Rwanda's culture of reading and writing," said Janvier Gasana, REB Education and Quality Standards head, following the final evaluation of top entries.

In the days leading up to the ceremony, the winners also participated in a writing symposium to prepare their stories and poems for publication. During the symposium, the winners met and worked with published children's authors, illustrators and professional educators to celebrate writing, improve upon their stories and poems, and bring them to life with illustrations.

The winning stories and poems will be published in two volumes, which will be distributed to all primary schools in Rwanda in 2015. Coordinating this effort is Drakkar Ltd., a local publishing company and current recipient of a USAID All Children Reading Grand Challenge grant, with technical support from Education Development Center through USAID's Literacy, Language and Learning project.

The competition is part of USAID's larger efforts together with the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of education in Rwanda by improving basic literacy and numeracy at the primary level.

"Reading is the foundation of all learning, and establishing literacy in early grades is absolutely critical to improving learning outcomes for students and for success in today's world", said Peter Malnak, USAID Mission Director, ahead of the event. "Making reading interesting and fun with a variety of books that children can use at home as well as at school is part of making that a reality, which is why USAID is so proud to support the Andika Rwanda competition and to see the excitement it has generated."

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is the foreign assistance agency of the United States Government. USAID supports \$150 million of development assistance annually to Rwanda, with programs in health, economic development, education, and democracy and governance.

Prizes for the winning authors include a tablet computer and voucher to purchase books. The awards ceremony will take place as a part of Rwanda's Stand Up for Literacy Week, during which Rwanda is encouraging organizations and individuals to showcase their efforts and commitment to develop a culture of reading throughout the country.

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